

The National Cancer Registrars Association

**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE CODE OF ETHICS**

(Established 1986, Revised 1995, Revised 2002, Revised 2005. Revised 2008)

Preamble

The cancer registrar is concerned with the development, use, and maintenance of hospital, centralized, or special purpose cancer programs that meet the needs of physicians, administrators, and planners; protect the patients' rights to privacy; and comply with ethical and legal requirements of the health care delivery system. To provide members of the Association and other registry professionals with definitive and binding guidelines of conduct, the National Cancer Registrars Association, Inc., adopted the following Professional Practice Code of Ethics, outlining principles of professional conduct.

I. GENERAL

- A. Conduct myself in the practice of the Cancer Registry profession so as to bring honor and dignity to myself, the cancer registry profession, and the Association.

GUIDES

1. The Cancer Registrar shall maintain high standards of conduct, integrity, and fairness in all professional actions and decisions to establish and sustain an irreproachable, professional reputation. Examples:
  - a. Make judgments and decisions without personal bias or prejudice.
  - b. Give primary consideration in all decisions as to the affect actions may have on a patient's health and welfare.
2. Business on behalf of the employer should be conducted honestly and ethically, declining favors that will influence any decisions, and avoiding commercialization of one's position.
3. A member has the obligation to refrain from commenting disparagingly, without justifications, about the professional work of another member.
4. Evaluation of performance of another registrar should be done fairly and with objectivity. Examples:

- a. Never let personal prejudice influence the type of evaluation or reference given.
    - b. Offer only job-related, solicited information.
  - 5. The Cancer Registrar shall use professional titles and degrees as earned and consistent with the dignity of the profession. A Certified Tumor Registrar should use the letters CTR.
  - 6. The Cancer Registrar shall not exert undue pressure in obtaining employment/clients.<sup>1</sup> Advertising should contain only the registrar's name, degree(s), address, telephone and fax numbers, nature of services offered, and professional memberships. If requested, a resume and list of references may be furnished. Qualifications listed should be those for which supporting evidence (e.g., employment history) is available.
  - 7. Distribution of announcements concerning the formal organization and availability of Cancer Registry consultant services is ethical. Repeated distribution of unsolicited announcements is unethical. Any distribution should be in keeping with the practice of other health-related professionals in the community.
  - 8. Use of business cards and letterhead stationery is acceptable but should not promote a commercial endeavor that may lower public esteem for the profession. The NCRA logo or address may not be used in this context.
  - 9. A member has the obligation to recognize appropriately the contributions of fellow members and co-workers to advance cancer registry practice. Publications should give credit where due to one's peers.
  - 10. A member has the right to speak out against policies espoused by the Association; however, representing one's own view as that of the Association or the majority of the members is unethical.
- B. Uphold the doctrine of confidentiality and the individual's right to privacy in the disclosure of personally identifiable medical and social information.

<sup>1</sup> Client: a person, entity, or organization who engages the professional advice or services of another.

## GUIDES

1. The patient has a right to feel confident that all identifiable information about him possessed by the cancer registry will be kept confidential unless he waives the privilege, or release of the information is compelled by statute, regulations, or other legal means.

2. Use and release of identifiable and non-identifiable information shall be according to the established institutional policies. Example:

Providing lists of patients' names for marketing research or other commercial use is not a proper function of a health institution and such lists should not be released by a cancer registrar without approval of the chief executive officer.

3. Every effort must be made to ensure that the computerization of cancer registry information is accomplished in a manner that protects the confidentiality of patient information. Example:

Actively participate in establishing controls to protect the patient's privacy when processing information electronically.

- C. Cooperate with other health professions and organizations to promote the quality of health care programs and the advancement of medical care, ensuring respect and consideration for the responsibility and the dignity of medical and other health professions.

## GUIDES

1. Cooperation with other professions and entities engaged in or supportive of health services is an essential factor in the cancer registry profession's greater aim of improving health services and supporting research relevant to the advancement of medical care. Examples:
  - a. Accept the right of other health professions to have purpose in their occupation and attempt to understand the thinking and work patterns of professional groups whose primary interest may be different from yours.
  - b. Treat all members of the medical and component professional staff with equal respect and due recognition of the status, privilege, and authority belonging to their respective professions.

- c. Refrain from making decisions or expressing opinions for which you are not qualified.
- d. Assist the medical staff and/or institution in working with other professional groups or entities engaged in utilization review and patient care evaluation, continuing education for professional staff, health services planning, clinical studies, proposed legislation or regulations affecting medical and statistical record systems, and like activities.

2. Courtesy, respect, and cooperation should govern the relationships of fellow cancer registrars.
  - a. Recognize that consultants and co-workers may have differing opinions regarding certain proposals or recommendations. Do not allow such differences to lead to utterances or actions inconsistent with the professional stature and dignity of a colleague.
  - b. Do not place loyalty above duty by protecting a fellow cancer registrar who is guilty of unfair or unethical practices. Questions of conduct should be referred to the Ethics Committee for review and evaluation.

## II. JOB ORIENTATION

- A. Recognize the source of the authority and powers delegated to me and conscientiously discharge the duties and responsibilities thus entrusted.

### GUIDES

1. It is the cancer registrar's duty to give loyal service and competently carry out the responsibilities of the position. Accepting a position for which one is inadequately prepared, or vacating a position without responsibility vested in the position or with the policies of the institution, is unethical.
2. The Cancer Registrar shall always responsibly carry out the duties entrusted to him/her, including:
  - a. Render a truthful accounting of the status of the work over which one has responsibility.
  - b. Assist the medical staff and other health professional staff in programs related to cancer patient care, cancer education, research, and committee activities in accordance with assigned responsibilities.
  - c. Resort to the special knowledge, skill, or experience of fellow professionals for referral, counsel, guidance, or consultation when one lacks in some detail the capability required to serve an employer.

3. For the protection of the employer/client and cancer registrar (including consultants and part-time supervisors), an agreement<sup>2</sup> should specify responsibilities, functions, objectives, and terms of service to be fulfilled.
  4. Relationships with cancer registry and other institutional personnel should be characterized by courtesy and respect. When serving as a consultant, part-time supervisor, or official surveyor/observer, one's responsibility and authority for seeking and obtaining certain information, files, and statistical data should be tempered with respect for another individual's tenable position and the institution's good name in the community.
  5. The Cancer Registrar, including consultants and other advisors, should maintain personal integrity and should not hesitate to advise the employer/client if, in the professional judgment of the registrar, the facility is in danger of errors of commission or omission.
- B. Preserve and secure cancer registry records, the information contained therein, and the appropriate secondary records in my custody in accordance with professional management practices, employer's policies, and existing legal provisions.

#### GUIDES

1. The Cancer Registrar shall always support and uphold the professional standards that would produce complete, accurate, and timely information to meet the health and related needs of the patient.
  2. The Cancer Registrar shall not participate in any improper preparation, alteration, or suppression of medical/health records or official minutes duly maintained as part of the operation of the health institution.<sup>3</sup>
- C. Preserve the confidential nature of professional determinations made by official committees of health and health-service organizations.

#### GUIDE

1. The Cancer Registrar shall abstain from discussing observations, comments, or findings concerning the practice of individuals that result.
2. Agreement (Contract): an understanding, preferably in writing, between consultant and client which spells out responsibilities, functions, objectives, and terms of the relationship including financial arrangements and charges.
3. Institution: a public or private organization of facilities and/or staff established to ensure continuity of program; a legally established agency or corporation.

from committee activities (such as medical audit findings, individual patient care, professional standards review recommendations or information obtained from any other source) with anyone except the appropriate institutional authority.

- D. Disclose to no one but proper authorities any evidence of conduct or practice observed or revealed in medical reports that suggests possible violation of established rules and regulations of the employer or professional practice.

#### GUIDE

The Cancer Registrar shall exercise discretion when releasing or discussing sensitive information acquired during employment or fulfillment of contracted services which concerns the administrative conduct or professional practices within the health institution. Examples:

- a. Disclose only to proper authorities the conduct or practices believed to be violating the institution's internal policies and rules.
- b. Disclose to proper regulatory or law enforcement agencies the conduct or practices believed to be illegal only when, after informing the health institution, no corrective action has been enacted.

### III. COMPENSATION

- A. Place service before material gain and strive always to provide services as needed to achieve quality health care and treatment for all who are ill with cancer or other neoplasms.

#### GUIDE

The Cancer Registrar shall place primary importance on providing a high standard of professional service; financial considerations are secondary to this objective.

- B. Accept compensation only for services rendered to, or negotiated with, the health institution.

## GUIDES

1. A Cancer Registrar shall not accept anything of value from a third party provider of services nor products to the health institution when that third party is functioning for the health institution.
2. Unless openly engaged in placement bureau service, the cancer registrar shall refuse to accept finder and referral fees. The Cancer Registrar shall refuse acceptance or an offer to divide cancer registrar service fees with another party who is not a partner in or an associate of a medical consultant group.
3. The Cancer Registrar should avoid conflict of interest by providing full disclosure to the employer or client of any interest in a provider of services or products.

## IV. PROFESSIONALISM

- A. Represent truthfully and accurately professional credentials, education, and experience in any official transaction or notice, including other positions and duality of interests.

## GUIDES

1. Misrepresentation of one's professional qualifications, employment, and interests reflects adversely on the profession and on oneself, and lowers the public esteem for the profession.
  2. A statement of any other positions of duality of interest in the health or health-related fields, both remunerative or non-remunerative in nature, should be made available on request of the employer. Examples of duality of interest are outside consultation services, committee appointments, advisory positions, elected office, business enterprise interests, and the like.
  3. Credentials, professional education, and experience are to be stated truthfully and accurately in any official transaction with NCRA or any other professional association, any employer or prospective employer, and any program coordinator or publisher.
  4. Those documents that authenticate registration, accreditation, academic achievements, and membership status in recognized professional organizations may be displayed. Displays that imply qualifications not possessed are unethical.
- B. The Cancer Registrar shall strive to increase the profession's body of systematic knowledge and individual competency through continued self-improvement and application of current advancements to the conduct of cancer registry practices.

## GUIDES



1. The achievements and preservation of professional status are accomplished through the mastery of cancer registry activities competently applied and the continual striving for the application of new knowledge and increased skills.

Examples:

- a. Acquire information by reading pertinent literature.
  - b. Attend workshops, institutes, and other continuing education programs.
  - c. Examine and scrutinize functions performed as a cancer registrar for purpose of self-evaluation in carrying out professional duties.
2. Advancements in the knowledge and practice of cancer registry administration emerge through participating in studies and projects related to the principles and practices underlying its activities.

Examples:

- a. Promote and/or participate in advancing the development, maintenance, use, and preservation of cancer registry practices.
  - b. Foresee subjects necessary in current and future training of cancer registrars.
3. The Cancer Registrar shall share information regarding changes in practice with fellow cancer registrars to increase professional knowledge and skills in accordance with the mission of the Association. The cancer registrar shall exercise care to distinguish the sharing of such information from the promotion of products or services of the employer or favorite commercial firm.
  4. The Cancer Registrar should provide for professional growth and development of those under his/her supervision.

- C. Participate in developing and strengthening professional manpower and appropriately represent the profession in public.

#### GUIDE

The future of the profession is dependent upon the affirmative and responsible activities of members to recruit and train fellow cancer registrars. Examples:

- a. Encourage and assist in the recruitment of students for professional training, while the need exists.
- b. Help the student and new cancer registrar to participate in activities and services for their continued development as cancer registrars.
- c. Use your special skills and knowledge to enhance the status and productivity of professional colleagues through participation in continuing education programs and publication of scholarly papers.
- d. Promote understanding of, respect for, and interest in the profession within one's community.

#### V. ASSOCIATION

- A. Discharge honorably the responsibility of any Association position to which I am appointed or elected.

#### GUIDE

The Association has a dual responsibility: safeguarding the members of the profession and promoting the services to be rendered by the professional to the health field. These two functions should be borne in mind in any deliberation undertaken by members, committees, officers, or delegates of the Association. Examples:

- a. Discharge one's obligation to the profession with integrity, discretion, and by one's best endeavors in representing the Association.
- b. Perform conscientiously the duties of any Association office to which elected or the assignments of any committee to which appointed.

- c. Resign one's office or assignment if unforeseen circumstances prevent one from carrying out the responsibilities of an office or committee after the acceptance of the post.
  - d. Preserve the confidentiality of any privileged information obtained as a member of the Executive Board or of a committee or other empanelled group, including information about qualifying examinations gained while serving the National Cancer Registrars Association, Inc.
- B. Uphold the standards of the profession by reporting to the Ethics Committee of this Association any breach of this code of ethics by fellow members of the profession.

### GUIDES

- 1. Any evidence of illegal, unfair, or incompetent practice or unethical conduct by fellow members or persons credentialed by this Association should be reported to the Ethics Committee of the National Cancer Registrars Association, Inc.
    - a. Transmit all referrals in writing, accompanied by supportive evidence of the unethical behavior or alleged violation.
    - b. Do not shield an individual guilty of unfair or unethical practices.
  - 2. Judgments of unethical behavior and recommendations for sanctions are the responsibility of the Ethics Committee rather than of individuals.
- C. Acknowledge that a finding of guilt of a violation of the Code of Ethics shall be subject to one or more of the following:
- a. rendered ineligible to be nominated for or elected to an office in the association.
  - b. suspension of NCRA membership.
  - c. revocation of NCRA membership.
  - d. revocation of CTR credential.